

Planning Commission Meeting for New Castle City took place on June 27, 2011 at 6:30 p.m. in the City of New Castle's Town Hall.

Members Present: David Bird, Chair
William Simpson, Co-Chair
Joe DiAngelo
Susan Marinelli
Vera Worthy
Jonathan Justice
Dorsey Fiske

Members Absent: Dr. Jack Norsworthy
Florence Smith

Also Present: Marian Hull, URS, City Planner

Mr. Bird called the meeting to order at 6:35 p.m. Roll call was taken. Mr. Justice was recognized as the newest member of the Planning Commission.

Approval of Minutes – A motion was made, seconded, and approved to accept the minutes of the May meeting as distributed.

Update on Planning Studies – Ms. Hull reported on the redevelopment ordinance proposed by a property owner. The Planning Commission recommended the proposed ordinance for a public hearing to City Council (Council). If Council does not receive any comments at their meeting on 7/12/11, they will likely hold the first and second reading at that meeting and possibly act on it in August. Concerning the Gateway District, property owner Eric Mayer is anxious to see the City move forward with this. The only remaining action is the third reading and adoption which has been a concern of this body and Council because of provisions in our current ordinance that regulate continuation of certain non-conforming uses that would be any outdoor uses not defined beyond that. There are several outdoor uses (billboards and junkyards) in this area. This body has forwarded to Council a recommendation stating the right to continue using billboards and junkyards be extended from 3 to 12 years and provide screening by the end of 12 years.

Council is interested in moving this issue forward and could possibly hold a public hearing in early August. Changes can only be made by way of an ordinance. *(Additional information concerning sequence of the proceeding followed.)*

Concerns of some property owners in the Gateway District (DG) were detailed. One owner is requesting a 10-year phase in under DG zoning or extend uses such as storage, warehouses, offices, equipment sales, light manufacturing for 10 years.

Budget Review/Proposed Riverfront Concept Plan

Mr. Bird made a proposal to Council for \$30,500 to fund professional development and training. *(Details of expenses provided.)*

WILMAPCO is offering some professional services concerning parking access to the waterfront and additional funding (\$400) was requested in the Commission's budget request for further implementation of the comprehensive plan to respond to areas other than the historic areas to try and identify and set up neighborhoods and assess the needs that the Planning Commission could address.

The Commission's budget request is being reviewed by Council and at their next meeting they will take up the full budget with the concept plan part of this process. A lot of

community concern has been expressed. The water front is one of the treasures of this community and should be protected. This concept plan came before the Planning Commission from a proposal presented by the New Castle Historical Alliance as a result of community meetings. Originally it was thought a larger study could be done including environmental studies, etc. and partially funded by WILMAPCO. WILMAPCO didn't approve that plan and we reduced our plan to a basic concept plan that could be presented to state and federal governments. If Council approves funds the process forward would involve community input providing general concept by engineers who have done like studies in other communities as to what is feasible without disturbing the environment (dredging). Other areas discussed include the old ferry port. Bull Hill has built up over the years and would require significant dredging. Part of the path leading through Battery Park has started to give in. We need further studies of the whole area to determine what can be done to bolster the path. Mr. Simpson is not sure the problem with the walkway at Battery Park is an issue this body should be concerned with. It should be addressed by the Trustees and/or the City. The budget needs to be approved by Council.

Resident Rick Fennell, 28 The Strand, said the sailing group is concerned with the impact of the development plan. They are familiar with the concept of the gateway plan. They are specifically concerned with the mooring field and any activity coming from the water front plan. Mr. Simpson does not anticipate any impact to this area because it is remote. Mr. Fennell questioned and received answers on matters covered in the May meeting minutes. *(Discussion followed.)*

Resident Mike Heyman, Bull Hill, believes the whole (water front) plan is speculation. We are in a recession, the Commission is requesting \$40,000, and you may/may not get grant money. He questioned why other capital improvements needed throughout the City aren't taking precedence.

Mr. Bird explained the Planning Commission is trying to "look down the road" and look at a comprehensive plan for the City for the next 20 years which the Commission has done with URS and public input. We take that plan and try to tailor it with more detailed studies. This concept was brought to this body from an organization in the city. Comments from the public are welcome and serves this body well. He noted it is \$6,000, not \$40,000. A concept plan needs to be done to determine what is feasible and more community input will be requested. Mr. Simpson informed the Planning Commission has never taken on a major project without going to the public for input. The comprehensive plan was open to the public the entire process. Mr. Heyman does not believe the New Castle Historical Alliance represents residents of the City and said additional expenses will be incurred beyond the \$40,000 anticipated for another plan and permits. *(Discussion followed including the process to secure construction repair funds.)*

Ms. Lynn Sheridan, 143 E. 2nd Street, asked if the plan presented to this body by the New Castle Historical Alliance was also presented to the City. According to Mr. Bird the group had various meetings locally with state and federal personnel and talked about the water front. State officials informed they needed a concept plan in order to proceed with talks about the water front. They got proposals and approached the Planning Commission about working with them and the City to come up with a concept plan to be considered.

Ms. Hull added the reason the plan went forward the way it did is because the water front is already a part of the comprehensive plan and this would help the City implement what is already part of that plan.

Ms. Sheridan expressed her concerns about knowing what is going on in the City as it happens, noting meeting minutes are not posted to the City's website in a timely manner.

Ms. Hull noted there has been no follow up of the recent DelDOT Open House. Mr. Bird said it was well attended and a number of comments offered. He suggested this item be included on the meeting agenda for July.

Commissioner's Comments – None.

Comments from the Public --None.

Next Meeting – The next scheduled meeting is 7/25/11 at 6:30 p.m.

Adjournment – **A motion was made and seconded to adjourn the meeting. The meeting was adjourned at 7:50 p.m.**

Respectfully submitted,

Debbie Turner

Debbie Turner
Stenographer